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(54) Title: NEW COMPOUNDS USEFUL FOR THE SYNTHESIS OF S- AND R-OMEPRAZOLE AND A PROCESS FOR THEIR PREPARATION

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to an improved method for the synthesis of the (S)- or (R)- enantiomer of omeprazole, characterized in that 2-[[(4-X-3,5-dimethylpyridin-2-yl)methyl]thio]-5-methoxy-1H-benzimidazole or 2-[[[(4-X-3,5-dimethyl-1-oxido)pyridin-2-yl)methyl]thio]-5-methoxy-1H-benzimidazole, wherein X is a leaving group, is oxidized into the corresponding sulphoxide which is obtained as a crystalline compound. Recrystallisation of the thus obtained sulphoxide results in a compound of enhanced chemical and optical purity, which is subsequently transformed into the (S)- or (R)- enantiomer of omeprazole.